

**Minutes of the
City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
June 11, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams (via Zoom); Members Dennis Souto, Michael Griffin, A. J. Dupere, Deborah Chag, Scott McDermott, and Ian Hanley

Members Excused: None.

Chair Bagley called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams attended the meeting via Zoom.

1. Acceptance of the May 14 Meeting Minutes

*The May 14 meeting minutes were **approved** as presented.*

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **548 Broad St:** 1 Red maple, fair condition, resident request. The resident is requesting the removal of this tree out of concern for failure caused by the structural defects. The tree presents some cavities and necrotic bark. There is good reaction wood forming around these defects and the tree is generally vigorous. The urban forestry crew can make reduction prunes to help alleviate limb weight.

Mr. Wiater said the removal was the resident's request. He said the tree had a cavity on the back and that the resident was concerned that the lower branch could fall and impact her property. Mr. Wiater said the tree could be pruned and that the branch could be tied in to the rest of the canopy. He said another defect that he noticed were a large section of reaction wood due to some kind of past wound, and another cavity on the front side. He said he did not recommend removal of the tree.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice recommended pruning the tree instead of removing it, seconded by Ms. Chag. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **215 Richards Ave:** 1 Norway maple, poor condition, City request, removal recommended by the City. This tree is of low vigor with uniform decline present throughout the canopy.

Mr. Wiater said there wouldn't be much of the tree left if it were pruned. He recommended removing the tree and then stump grinding and matching the grade to the surrounding portions of the right-of-way as best as possible. Vice-Chair Griffin asked about the sycamore on Rockland St. Mr. Wiater said it looked very rough and that he had been keeping an eye on it.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Hanley. The motion passed unanimously.*

Note: The next two tree removal requests were addressed together.

- **139 Cass St:** 1 Norway maple, poor condition, City request, removal recommended by the City. There are large dead leaders in this tree, and there is uniform decline throughout the canopy. The urban forestry crew has pruned this tree twice in the last 6 years and the decline of this tree has persisted.
- **149 Cass St:** 1 Norway maple, poor condition, City request, removal recommended by the City. There is moderate decline throughout the canopy. The urban forestry crew has pruned this tree twice in the last 6 years and the decline of this tree has persisted.

Mr. Wiater said the Norway maple at 139 Cass St was pruned twice and that more deadwood kept being taken out. He said the arborist technician recommended removing both trees at 139 and 149 Cass St, and Mr. Wiater agreed because the trees would just keep declining.

The homeowner Sam Dushkin of 139 Cass via Zoom agreed that the tree was in a sorry state but that it provided him with some privacy, and he asked what would replace it and when. Mr. Wiater said the tree would probably be removed by the end of July. He said the crew would grind as much of the stump material as possible, otherwise they would leave the site alone for a year to allow the remaining stump material to break down and create a more hospitable environment to plant a tree. He said the best-case scenario was to plant at least one tree by 2026, and that it could be a large shade tree with a faster growth habit. He said it would take a few years for the new tree to establish and get significant growth. Mr. Dushkin asked if anything could be done about the soil, noting the brown patch caused by the grade. Mr. Wiater said the City did not usually do soil amendments in sites like that but could inject some nutrients into the soil via compost tea.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend removal of both trees, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **870 Woodbury Ave:** 1 Norway maple, poor condition, City request, removal recommended by the City. There are large dead leaders in this tree, and there is decline throughout the canopy.

Mr. Wiater said if the tree was pruned, there would not be much of it left. He said they would initially raise the tree over the driveway and that the tree would look strange with its top taken off and would be left with two branches growing outward instead of upward. He said the resident was fine with removing the tree.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. McDermott moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **Pease Wastewater Treatment Plant (135 Corporate Dr):** 1 Red maple, poor condition, City request, removal recommended by the City. The tree is significantly declined, and the future renovation to the facility will result in root damage.

Mr. Wiater said the tree was located behind a few buildings at the treatment plant. He said it was not doing great and that it would also be impacted by all the future renovations at the plant. Mr. Rice agreed. Mr. Wiater said Pease was planting new trees but did not want them mixed in with their expensive facilities and equipment.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Ms. Chag. The motion passed unanimously.*

3. New Business

The topic of tree disease tracking in New Hampshire was discussed. Mr. Dupere explained how the disease anthracnose affected the leaves by making the tree shed them and push up more leaves behind them. He said there was no way to stop the disease because it was a fungal problem. The status of beech trees and beech leaf disease was discussed. Mr. Dupere said the disease was worse and occurred faster than the emerald ash borer. It was further discussed.

Mr. Wiater introduced the new summer intern Nathaniel Swanson. Mr. Swanson said he was a graduate of the University of Maine and interested in the environment. Mr. Wiater said Mr. Swanson would help with a lot of the compost tea and tree inventory and would work with the rest of the crew watering trees and so on.

The London plane on Rockland St opposite 215 Richards Ave was discussed. Mr. Wiater said the tree looked defoliated due to anthracnose and was missing the central leader as well. He said he was waiting to see if the other London plane trees across the City would come back. Mr. Griffin asked about the Siberian elm tree. Mr. Wiater said it had a lot of deadwood and that he wanted to prune it first but that it was a tricky intersection to get a bucket truck in, so it would take time and coordination to work on it. It was further discussed.

Ms. Chag asked if residents were responsible for maintaining the tree strips in front of their homes. Mr. Rice said technically the residents were not responsible and that the City did not budget for routine maintenance and only came by a few times in the summer.

4. Old Business

- **Update on 205 Broad St:** 1 northern catalpa, fair condition, removal requested by resident. The removal of this tree will facilitate the renovation of this property which will create off- street parking for the residents. The request for variance at the Zoning Board of Adjustment was denied at the May 27, 2025 meeting. As such, construction will not occur as presented at the TPGC meeting in April. The tree may be requested for removal separate from the necessity of construction, or if an updated plan calls for the tree to be removed.

The committee discussed the Board of Adjustment denying the request to remove the catalpa tree. Mr. Wiater said the resident could still request the tree removal from the committee if they felt that the tree was unhealthy or a hazard.

Next meeting: Wednesday, July 9, 2025

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker